

Victims' Commissioner News

October/November 2016



Thought for the day:

"Life is so much brighter when we focus on what truly matters."

A message from Baroness Newlove

Dear reader, (I always wanted to start writing something that way!) welcome to my first newsletter. It's been a busy couple of months in the VC office, I have been visiting Police and Crime Commissioners up and down the country, appeared in front of the Justice Select Committee, filmed the introduction to a bullying video, had the opportunity to speak to a group of law students and most importantly – published my much anticipated review of Restorative Justice.

I hope you enjoy finding out what my team and I have been up to – we would love to hear your thoughts.

Best wishes,

My appearance in front of the Justice Select

Committee was on Tuesday 8th November. I was asked to attend to answer questions about my role as Victims' Commissioner.

The Committee asked a wide range of questions, which came thick and fast, covering recent court closures; how the shortage of Registered Intermediaries has impacted on vulnerable victims and witnesses giving evidence in court, child victims, the availability of compensation for criminal injuries, the use of the Victim Personal Statement in criminal proceedings and Restorative Justice.

I was fortunate to share the questioning with my Chief Executive. If you would like to know how we got on you can read the transcript from the session here - <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/justice-committee/the-work-of-the-victims-commissioner/oral/42960.pdf>.

I know some of you have written to my team and me about several of these topics, and I wanted to reassure you that I told the Committee about some of the concerns you have raised with me.



I was invited to speak at the BPP Law School in London on 18th

October, where I spoke to a group of students studying on both the Legal Practice and Bar Vocational Course. These courses are taken after their law degree to teach students about the practical aspects of becoming a solicitor or a barrister. But, from what I have seen, victims' issues are overlooked in the criminal justice process; we need to redress the balance.

I was really pleased to see that the students I spoke to were receptive and engaging, recognising that their legal training made very little reference to victims and their needs in the criminal justice process. It seems that they too wanted that to change.



Contact us:



www.victimscommissioner.org.uk

victims.commissioner@victimscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

@HNlove



'My life as a bully' ...I think I may need to clarify this – it was the title of the film I feature in. I was fortunate to be involved in an anti-bullying film aimed at educating and informing school-aged children about bullying. The film assists adults and young people to recognise, prevent and take action against bullying.

I filmed the introduction to the 45-minute film, which premiered on 12 November in Wales. The film highlights the experience of a young person who, through a series of mishaps and information, is treated as a bully herself and soon discovers the pitfalls and hurt that bullying behaviour causes.

I am pleased to be part film because bullying behaviour is unacceptable; the impact can be traumatic and often continues into adulthood. It is not right that almost half of children and young people say they have experienced bullying at school - we need to make sure they can learn in a safe environment and not feel isolated or victimised by others.

The film was produced by Firehorse Productions and released to coincide with National Anti-Bullying Week 2016. You can take a look at the trailer here - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TC0_ym5ODvw.



I felt very honoured when I was greeted at Birkenhead Sixth Form College by these two fine horses to attend the launch of an initiative with Merseyside Police to tackle anti-social behaviour in Wirral.



My latest review into Restorative Justice was published during International Restorative Justice Week 2016, on 22 November. Some of you may have taken part in RJ, and others may have even assisted as part of this review – the review itself reported on the quality of RJ services, according to the victim.

My review found that almost half of victims who opt to take part in restorative justice do so in order to encourage offenders to turn their lives around. However, only 4.2% of all victims of crime were offered the opportunity to meet with their offender – the lowest proportion since 2010.

If you would like to read more about the review, you can visit the website here - <http://victimscommissioner.org.uk/victims-say-taking-part-in-restorative-justice-helps-the-offender/>.

I have been busy visiting a number of Police and Crime Commissioner areas across England and Wales to see how their victims' services are operating. In the last couple of months I have visited North Wales, Thames Valley, Cheshire and Avon & Somerset. It has been very helpful for me to see how each area has set up their services for victims and listen to the feedback from victims.

I would very much welcome your feedback on any experiences you have had lately with victim support services, whether these be positive or negative. I will feed this information back to PCCs when I meet them.

Upcoming Dates

8 December: speech at the Parole Board Member conference

9 December: speech at the South Yorkshire Victims' Service Showcase event

16 December: visit to Gloucestershire PCC

Contact us:

